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ABSTRACT

An eighth grade English teacher with 12 years of teaching experience in a conventional classroom setting decided to modify teaching and learning strategies to respond to the needs, interests, and abilities of individual students in a group setting. This action research study used the method of reflective analysis to analyze the process and results over a three-year period. Key components of the reflective analysis process include: (1) a recollection of an experience; (2) organization and use of data; (3) a form of representation; (4) an analysis of change and the process of change; and (5) confirmation of the findings. A description is given of how each of these five stages were followed in developing an accurate profile of the teachers' progress in bringing about the desired application of diagnostic teaching to the classroom. Factors that significantly assisted or impeded this progress are pointed out. The study shows that the method of reflective analysis is viable as a tool for experienced teachers who may be interested in examining their professional practice through a formal process of introspection. Appendices include data resulting from the study and references are supplied. (JD)

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Evolution of a Diagnostic Teacher: A Reflective Analysis

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Presented at
the Annual Conference of
the Association of Teacher Educators
Atlanta, Georgia

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Evolution of a Diagnostic Teacher: A Reflective Analysis

An eighth grade English teacher with twelve years of teaching experience in a conventional classroom setting decided to modify teaching and learning strategies to respond to the needs, interests, and abilities of individual students in a group setting. This action research study uses the method of reflective analysis to analyze the process and results over a three-year period.

Background

As a doctoral student in Curriculum and Supervision at a large university, the teacher learned attitudes, concepts, and skills that facilitated the development of strategies and techniques of diagnostic teaching. In December, 1982, he formed a school-university partnership in diagnostic supervision with a university professor. The purpose was to improve instruction in English classes taught by the teacher and to enhance personal and professional growth. In January, 1983, he developed and initiated a plan for learning that included taking a course in diagnostic supervision taught by the supervisor; working with him on an original research project; assisting him in teaching a graduate course in research in supervision; serving a supervisory internship; and reading selected literature on teacher effectiveness, the teaching of English, and diagnostic teaching. From September, 1983, through December, 1985, he experimented with and refined strategies and techniques for the diagnostic teaching of

eighth grade English and used self-assessment tools to monitor and adjust teaching behaviors during their implementation. In January, 1986, he applied the method of reflective analysis to examine the process of change in his attitudes, concepts, and skills relative to the improvement of instruction in his classroom.

Method

Reflective analysis is a naturalistic method of inquiry derived from diagnostic teaching (Seager, undated; Renko, 1984) and certain theories of action in action research that describe how teachers restructure tacit knowledge through a formal process of introspection (Sanders, McCutcheon, 1984; Schubert, 1984; Garman, 1984). Key components of the process include: (1) a recollection of an experience, (2) organization and use of data, (3) a form of representation, (4) an analysis of change and the process of change, and (5) confirmation of the findings. According to Schön (1983), involvement in reflective analysis stimulates criticism, testing, and the restructuring of tacit knowledge "so as to produce new actions that improve a situation or trigger the reframing of a problem" (p. 277). In action research the method can be used to develop roles, frame problems, form new ideas for useful practice, build repertoires of effective teaching strategies and techniques, or discover self.

Application

Application of the method was carried out in five stages, beginning with the recollection of an experience. This stage

involved two processes: (1) a process of recalling significant events over three years that contributed to the teacher's evolution into a diagnostic teacher and (2) a process of listing and arranging the events chronologically.

The first was facilitated by using Rico's (1983) technique of clustering. Application of the technique involved participation in a nonlinear brainstorming activity in which the teacher jotted down words associated with the phrase: Events in Diagnostic Teaching. During the activity he connected words and phrases that were related and then analyzed the connections to see what patterns emerged. Outcomes of the activity included the identification of twenty-five events deemed by the teacher to be significant in contributing to his development as a diagnostic teacher and the emergence of four patterns that facilitated understanding of their significance. The patterns showed that the teacher considered events to be significant if they represented a change in attitude, a resource that led to a change in attitude or behavior, an example of formative evaluation, or a constraint in the development of the diagnostic teaching role.

The second process was facilitated by constructing a time line of significant events identified by the teacher during the brainstorming activity. (See Appendix A, pp. 11.) The construction of the time line served three purposes. It helped the teacher list and arrange events chronologically; it provided a means to reconstruct the experience; and it facilitated understanding of the significance of the events

in relation to time.

Application of the method also involved the organization and use of data. During the three years of the study, descriptive data were collected by the teacher through the process of diagnostic teaching from sources inside and outside the classroom. Sources of data included both quantitative and qualitative measures: video tapes of teaching; student scores on standardized achievement tests; students' responses on eight administrations of the Diagnostic Instrument of Supervision; formal evaluation using the prescribed state evaluation form for teachers; an anecdotal record of descriptions of teaching and learning; student writing products; the teacher's journal; structured interviews with students; conferences with administrators; letters from parents; and the school newspaper.

In January, 1986, documentation that was deemed appropriate for the study was classified according to the type of information that was produced. Four types of information were identified:

1. The documentation provided information about the attitudes of an experienced, secondary teacher toward instruction during the process of his evolution into a diagnostic teacher.

2. Documentation also produced information about students' perceptions of their classroom learning environment during the period in which diagnostic

teaching strategies and techniques were implemented by the teacher.

3. Documentation of the diagnostic teaching experience also produced information about student achievement in English classes taught by the teacher over this time period.

4. Finally, documentation provided information about the perceptions of other teachers and administrators toward instruction carried out by the teacher during the diagnostic teaching experience.

This organization of the data served four functions: It assisted the process of describing--in an analytic way--the teacher's evolution into a diagnostic teacher; it provided a basis to develop lines of inquiry for the investigation; it assisted the analysis of change and the process of change; and it facilitated the confirmation of the findings.

The third stage in the application of the method involved a form of representation. During this stage the teacher composed a narrative of the experience, using the time line to help structure and organize the composition and data to augment descriptions of significant events occurring over the time period.

The design of the narrative had three components: an operational definition of a competent, traditional teacher in a traditional setting; an operational definition of a diagnostic teacher; and a description and analysis of the process by which

the traditional teacher, who was considered to be competent and effective in a traditional setting, became a diagnostic teacher in the same setting.

Sources used to facilitate the writing process were the teacher's doctoral dissertation, his journal, and papers presented at the 1984 Conference of the Association of Teacher Educators (ATE) and the 1985 Meeting of the New England Educational Research Organization (NEERO).

The fourth stage in the application of the method involved an analysis of change and the process of change. The analysis of change was assisted by the development of four lines of inquiry that were used to examine the evolutionary process from different perspectives. One line of inquiry was to examine changes in the teacher's attitudes and perceptions of teaching over the three-year period. Documentation obtained from two administrations of the DIOS and the teacher's journal was used to identify areas of change.

A second line of inquiry was to examine changes in students' perceptions of their learning environment relative to the development and implementation of strategies and techniques of diagnostic teaching. Documentation obtained from eight administrations of the DIOS, structured interviews with students, and an anecdotal record of descriptions of teaching and learning were analyzed to find patterns of change.

A third line of inquiry was to look at the process of change in terms of student achievement. Test scores obtained

from three administrations of the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) were examined to see what changes occurred in the areas of Language Mechanics and Language Expression.

A fourth line of inquiry was to analyze changes in the perceptions of other professional staff members in the teacher's school and district relative to his development and implementation of strategies and techniques of diagnostic teaching. Documentation used in the analysis included conferences with administrators, the teacher's journal, and formal evaluation using the prescribed state evaluation form for teachers.

Outcomes of the analysis included a positive self-evaluation by the teacher, more favorable attitudes toward their learning environment on the part of students, maintenance of above average scores on standardized achievement tests, and opposition from other staff members in the teacher's school and district.

The analysis of the change process involved the identification of factors that were deemed significant in influencing the development of the diagnostic teaching style. This analysis was facilitated by an examination of changes that occurred during the evolutionary process and the formation of "naturalistic generalizations" (Stake, 1978, p. 6).

Factors that were identified as significant in assisting the development of the diagnostic teaching style were: (1) certain program features of the teacher's doctoral program in Curriculum and Supervision; (2) characteristics and attitudes of the university supervisor; (3) certain strategies of diagnostic supervision; (4) the development and implementation

of a repertoire of ten teaching strategies for diagnostic teaching; (5) the development and implementation of a management system for individualized instruction in a heterogeneously grouped, self-contained classroom; (6) the use of an individualized marking system; and (7) the use of various self-assessment tools, such as Seager's (1979) Diagnostic Instrument of Supervision and Diagnostic Paradigm for Supervision and Teaching (Seager, 1974, 1979), the teacher's journal, and the use of Heathers' (1968) check list for individualizing instruction.

Factors that were identified as significant in impeding the development of the diagnostic teaching style were: (1) myths about teaching and learning, (2) a lack of support from colleagues, and (3) conflicts with administrators.

The fifth stage in the application of the method involved confirmation of the findings. The finding in the study was that the teacher was able to achieve the status of a diagnostic teacher. During the evolutionary process he established Heathers' (1968) Checklist for assessing the amounts and types of individualized instruction in an educational setting as criteria in determining his status as a diagnostic teacher. The study confirmed that the teacher was able to meet the criteria that he had established.

Outcomes

The study showed that reflective analysis was used as a tool of formative evaluation of teaching and learning. The

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See Appendices B, C, and D for copies of the DIOS, the Diagnostic Paradigm for Supervision and Teaching, and Heathers' Checklist.

application of the method in this case facilitated the process of identifying and dispelling myths and confirmed a commitment on the teacher's part to accomplish a significant change in his professional behavior. Success in the new role also helped him stand up to the opposition he received from other teachers and administrators when he implemented progressive strategies for teaching and learning in the traditional junior high school setting.

Significance

This study shows that the method of reflective analysis is viable as a tool for experienced teachers who may be interested in examining their professional practice through a formal process of introspection. Applications of the method may be used to make sense out of patterns of change of professional behavior, as a guide to changes in professional practice, to reinforce change, or to convince others that changes in teaching behavior may be helpful to them in the improvement of instruction.

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Appendix A: A Time Line of Significant Events Occurring During the Teacher's Evolution into a Diagnostic Teacher

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS	Dec.-Jan., 1983	Feb.-March, 1983	April-May, 1983	June-July, 1983	Aug.-Sept., 1983	Oct.-Nov., 1983	Dec.-Jan., 1984	Feb.-March, 1984	April-May, 1984	June-July, 1984	Aug.-Sept., 1984	Oct.-Nov., 1984	Dec.-Jan., 1985	Feb.-March, 1985	April-May, 1985	June-July, 1985	Aug.-Sept., 1985	Oct.-Nov., 1985	Dec.-Jan., 1986
1. Research in Supervision	✓																		
2. Visit to Central Elementary	✓																		
3. Visit with Frank Duffy	✓																		
4. Diagnostic Supervision	✓	✓	✓																
5. Diagnostic Conference	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6. Classroom Observations	✓	✓			✓				✓										
7. Journal Keeping	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. Administrations of DIOS	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓			✓			✓			✓	
9. Inservice Presentations		✓						✓											
10. Meetings at Kings Restaurant		✓			✓		✓				✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	
11. Ph.D. Internship			✓	✓															
12. Administrations of the CTBS			✓						✓						✓				
13. Internship at Nantucket				✓															
14. Presentation at ATE							✓												
15. The Writing Process					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
16. Group for Personal Growth					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓						
17. Madeline Hunter Inservice			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓					✓
18. Course in Micro Computers							✓	✓	✓										
19. The Mangement System								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20. Conferences with Administrators		✓				✓	✓		✓					✓	✓			✓	✓
21. Doctoral Dissertation									✓	✓	✓								
22. Presentation at NEERO															✓				
23. Course Assistant at Univ.																	✓	✓	✓
24. Presentations at COPIS																		✓	
25. Grievance Proceedings																			✓

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Appendix B : Seager's (1979) Diagnostic Instrument of Supervision

Report to the Teacher

Diagnostic Supervision

Diagnostic supervision responds to the individual needs, interests, and abilities of teachers concerned with the improvement of instruction and with their professional growth. This report can supplement data from classroom observation and from other sources as you plan for improving instruction in your classes.

The survey is related to a diagnostic paradigm that begins with Recognition of Need, Statement of a Problem, and Agreement on Objectives. The paradigm continues with Assessment of Attitudes, Concepts and Skills. These assessments lead to Strategies for Mastery of Objectives. The diagnostic paradigm is appropriate both for teaching and for supervision. Three elements of the diagnostic paradigm from the basis for grouping the twenty-nine items of the survey in the areas described in this report. The report summarizes the responses to each item in the survey and includes both a general statement for each area and some specific remarks relating these general statements to the responses in your classes. Your insights will be valuable in interpreting these remarks in the light of other data available to you concerning the effectiveness of teaching and learning in your classes.

Area Scores and Item Scores

In addition to the summary of responses in each category (M = much improvement desirable, S = some improvement desirable; L = little improvement desirable; N = no improvement desirable; B = blank), a scoring system has been applied to the students' responses (M = 3, S = 2, L = 1, N = 0) and a total score computed for each item. An average score for the items in each area has also been computed. These area scores range from 0.00 (no improvement desirable) to 3.00 (much improvement desirable). By comparing the three area scores you can decide which area or areas to focus on in planning for the improvement of instruction.

The grouping of the items in each area and the general statement for each area are shown below. The statistical summaries and the remarks for each area are presented separately.

Area I: *Recognition of Need*

Items:
1. The teacher understands students' difficulties and helps them see how to correct their mistakes.
2. The teacher uses good ideas suggested by the students.
5. The teacher understands what students mean even when they find it difficult to put their thoughts into words.
10. The teacher makes students feel important in this class.
12. The teacher is careful not to hurt the students' feelings.
17. The teacher really seems to enjoy teaching these students.
21. The teacher helps students grow in self-confidence in this class.
22. There seems to be a good reason for the things the teacher does in this class.
23. When students want to ask questions or tell the teacher something they are encouraged to do so.
24. The teacher cares whether the students are doing well or not.
25. The teacher treats the students fairly.
29. Time seems to go by quickly for the students in this class.

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General Statement:

At its best instruction responds to the individual needs, interests, and abilities of students while enabling the teacher to experience satisfaction with and stimulation from the facilitation of student learning. The items in Area I relate to some of the basic needs of both teachers and students within the learning environment.

Students need to be understood by the teacher, especially when they encounter difficulties in their learning (Item 1) and in expressing their thoughts (Item 5). They need to maintain and enhance their self-esteem (Items 10 and 21). They need to earn respect for their ideas (Item 2) and to feel that they are being treated fairly (Item 28). They need to perceive that the teacher is genuinely interested in their progress (Item 24) and that the teacher enjoys teaching them (Item 17). They need to be deeply involved in their learning (Item 29) and to believe that the teacher's behavior and expectations have a rational basis (Item 22). They need emotional support from a sensitive adult (Item 12).

The teacher needs to feel that there are many opportunities for personal and professional satisfaction in the classroom. If these opportunities are abundant and well used, the teacher will enjoy teaching the students (Item 17) and will find it easier to be sensitive to their feelings (Item 12) and fair in all transactions with them (Item 28). In this ideal environment the teacher will be under minimal stress and will have maximum physical and psychological energy available to facilitate students' learning.

Area II: *Agreement on Objectives*

Items:
4. Sometimes in this course students do work that is not required but is valued by the teacher.
6. There is never any undue fooling around in this class.
8. The things the teacher asks students to do are challenging.
14. Students answer most of the teacher's questions acceptably.
18. Students learn important things in this class by thinking for themselves.
20. Students learn from each other in this class.
25. Students use their time well in this class.
26. The teacher knows what students are doing and what's going on in class.
27. The students like to cooperate with the teacher.

General Statement:

When students and their teacher agree on objectives for the students' learning, the students are likely to direct their behavior toward mastery of the objectives rather than fooling around (Items 6 and 25). They are likely to use opportunities for self-initiated work (Items 4 and 18) and to use other students as resources in their learning (Item 20). Students generally prefer tasks that are challenging but within their reach (Item 8). When the objectives reflect a valid assessment of students' mastery of concepts and skills (see Area III), students are usually able to answer the teacher's questions acceptably (Item 14) and will want to cooperate with the teacher (Item 27). When students and the teacher agree on objectives, it is easy for the teacher to monitor students' behavior (Item 26).

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Area III: *Assessment of Concepts and Skills*

Items:
3. The students understand the teacher's explanations.
7. Students know which things are important for them to learn.
9. The things the teacher asks students to do are not impossible.
11. Students have enough opportunity to practice before tests.
13. Tests in this class help students learn important things.
15. Homework for this class is useful and interesting to the students.
16. Most students usually do well on the tests the teacher gives.
19. The teacher uses a marking system students understand and respect.

General Statement:

Self-evaluation is an important skill for students to develop. When students and their teacher agree on objectives (see Area II), students have the opportunity to assess their own mastery of concepts and skills in relation to the objectives. This assessment by students begins with knowing which things are important for them to learn (Item 7).

Students verify their self-evaluations by comparing them with the teacher's evaluations of their learning. Therefore, it is important that they understand and respect the teacher's marking system (Item 19) and that the tests measure why they have actually learned (Item 16) after they have had ample opportunity to practice the concepts and skills involved in their learning (Items 11 and 15). Students should be assigned useful and interesting tasks in class and for homework (Item 15), and these tasks should be within their capacity to complete satisfactorily (Item 9). By explaining concepts clearly the teacher makes it possible for the students to develop skills that are needed to master the objectives for their learning.

When diagnostic tests are used by the teacher, the students are helped to determine what they are ready to learn next, and in this way the tests help students learn. Similarly, when students have informally demonstrated mastery of the objectives for their learning, a test provides a formal opportunity for them to demonstrate that mastery and to gain confidence that their learning is proceeding at an appropriate pace. (Item 13).

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A SURVEY

This survey will help you and your teacher think about the classes you have had together so far this year. It is important that you express your real opinion about these classes.

Do not put your name on this survey. No-one will know which responses are yours. A summary of all the responses will be used by the teacher in planning future classes. Use pen or pencil to complete the following:

Date_____ Teacher_____

Period_____ Subject_____ Grade____ Boy _____ Girl_____

You were born on_____
Month Day Year

The items listed below and over the page tell something about what a class might be like. Each item suggests an area of possible improvement in this class. You will be asked to state your opinion of *how much improvement is desirable* in this class in the area suggested by each item. If you think *much improvement* is desirable, circle M at the left of the item. If you think *some improvement* is desirable, circle S. If you think *little improvement* is desirable, circle L. If you think *no improvement* is desirable, circle N. Here is a sample item and one student's response to it:

M S L (N) 30. When the teacher calls on a student, the other students can hear this student's response.

The student circled N to express the opinion that no improvement was desirable in the area suggested by this item.

Consider each item carefully. Do not leave any item blank. Choose the response closest to your opinion. If you want to explain your response, write in the space after the item. You will have about ten minutes to complete your responses. Study quietly when you have finished. Begin when you are sure you understand the directions.

M S L N 1. The teacher understands students' difficulties and helps them see how to correct their mistakes.

M S L N 2. The teacher uses good ideas suggested by the students.

M S L N 3. The students understand the teacher's explanations.

M S L N 4. Sometimes in this course students do work that is not required but is valued by the teacher.

M S L N 5. The teacher understands what students mean even when they find it difficult to put their thoughts into words.

M S L N 6. There is never any undue fooling around in this class.

M S L N 7. Students know which things are important for them to learn.

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Survey - Page 2

M S L N 8. The things the teacher asks students to do are challenging.

M S L N 9. The things the teacher asks students to do are not impossible.

M S L N 10. The teacher makes the students feel important in this class.

M S L N 11. Students have enough opportunity to practice before tests.

M S L N 12. The teacher is careful not to hurt the students' feelings.

M S L N 13. Tests in this class help students learn important things.

M S L N 14. Students answer most of the teacher's questions acceptably.

M S L N 15. Homework for this class is useful and interesting to the students.

M S L N 16. Most students usually do well on the tests the teacher gives.

M S L N 17. The teacher really seems to enjoy teaching these students.

M S L N 18. Students learn important things in this class by thinking for themselves.

M S L N 19. The teacher uses a marking system students understand and respect.

M S L N 20. Students learn from each other in this class.

M S L N 21. The teacher helps students grow in self-confidence in this class.

M S L N 22. There seems to be a good reason for the things the teacher does in this class.

M S L N 23. When students want to ask questions or tell the teacher something they are encouraged to do so.

M S L N 24. The teacher cares whether the students are doing well or not.

M S L N 25. Students use their time well in this class.

M S L N 26. The teacher knows what students are doing and what's going on in class.

M S L N 27. The students like to cooperate with the teacher.

M S L N 28. The teacher treats the students fairly.

M S L N 29. Time seems to go by quickly for the students in this class.

If there are any other areas in which you think improvement in this class is desirable, please describe these areas briefly in the space below.

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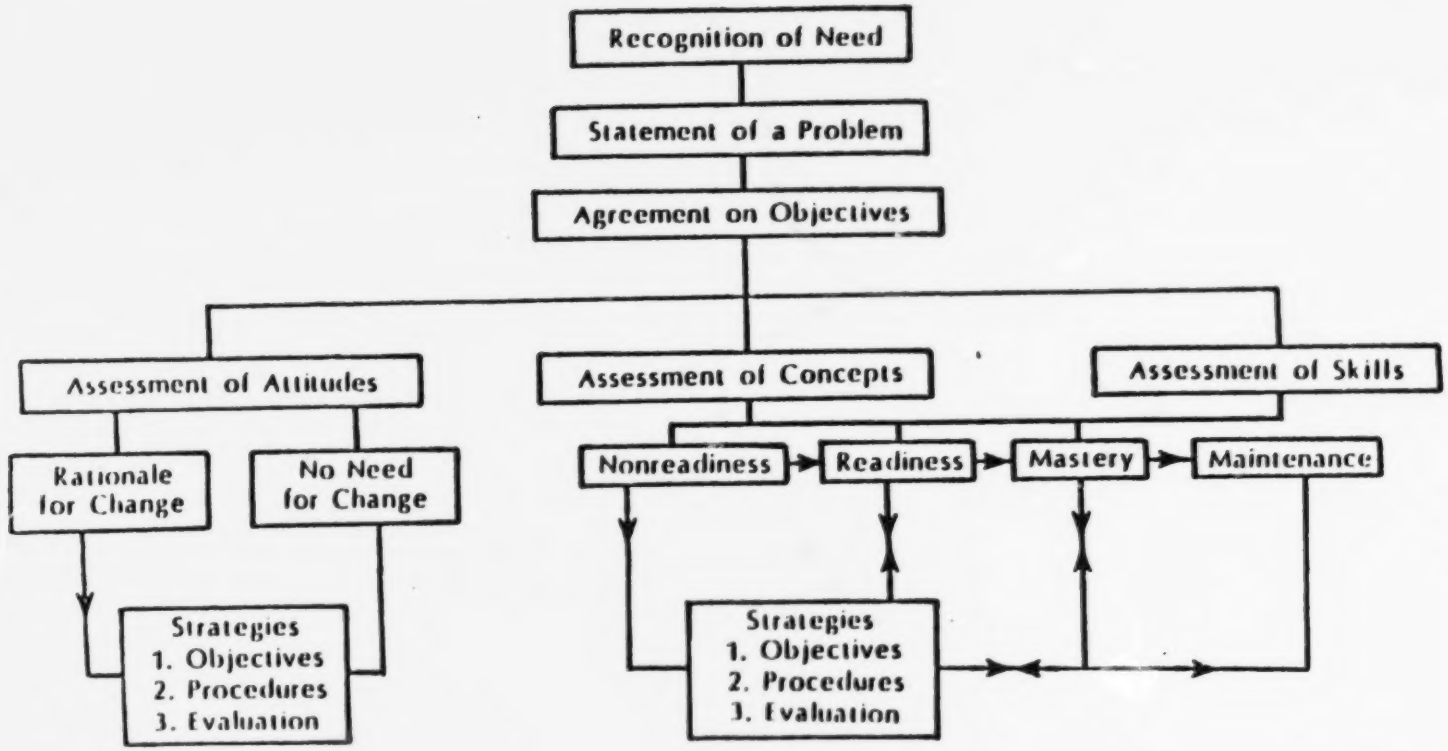
Diagnostic Paradigm for Teaching

(Seager, 1979)



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Appendix D: Heathers' (1968) Checklist for Assessing Amounts and Types of Individualized Instruction

University of Pittsburgh
Learning Research and Development Center

Revised: January 22, 1968
Glen Heathers

CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING AMOUNT AND TYPES OF INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

This checklist can be used to assess individualization in any instructional program. Also, a teacher can use it to size up individualization in his teaching. In responding to each question, identify the curricular areas and types of learning goals involved in individualization, the proportion and categories of students involved, and the proportion of time instruction in the area is individualized.

1. Is lesson planning done for individual students rather than for a group?
2. Are pretests used to determine what parts of a unit a student needs to study?
3. Are different learning tasks assigned different class members at any given time?
4. Do different students working on a unit use different materials and equipment?
5. Do different students work on a given unit in different learning settings?
6. Does the teacher use different instructional techniques with different students?
7. Is group teaching, when it occurs, based on a determination that each student is ready to study the same task and in the same way as other members of the group?
8. Do students conduct a major part of their learning on a self-directed basis?
9. Do students have a hand in deciding the units they are to study, how they are to study a unit, and when they have mastered the objectives of a unit?
10. Is pupil teamwork used so that students often receive help from one another rather than always seeking help from the teacher?
11. Is help usually offered students individually rather than in group settings?
12. Do students each proceed at their individual rates through a unit?
13. Are students tested individually and enabled to move on promptly to another task?

CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR INDIVIDUALIZATION

In order to achieve a high level of individualization, teachers need help from various resources that facilitate conducting instruction on an individualized basis.

1. Are the learning objectives clearly spelled out in terms of student behaviors?
2. Are curricular units prepared, each with its set of specific learning objectives?
3. Are tests available to measure accomplishment of the objectives of each unit?
4. Are programed learning units available for use in self-directed study?
5. Is there equipment and are there learning settings for individual work?
6. Is instruction focused on developing students' competencies in self-direction?
7. Is the system for communicating information on students adequate and efficient?
8. Are there teacher aides or clerks available to handle non-professional duties?
9. Is class size adjusted in terms of amount of self-direction students can manage?
10. Are there adequate provisions for intensive staff education in individualization?

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